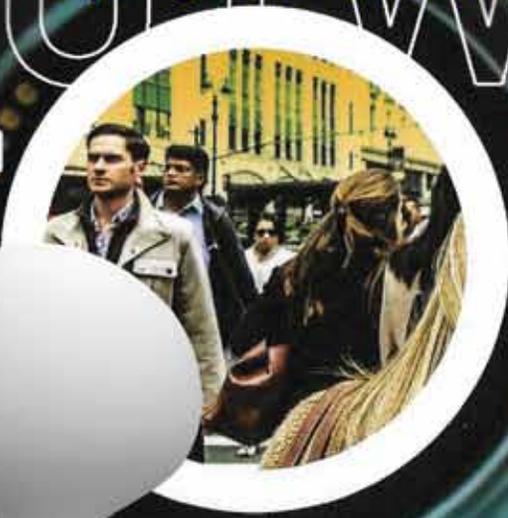


# T M

**TRUTH Magazine**

Spring 2019 Edition



2019 GGF Leadership Conference

Introducing the unchurched to Christ.  
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*Working Together to Advance the Grace of God  
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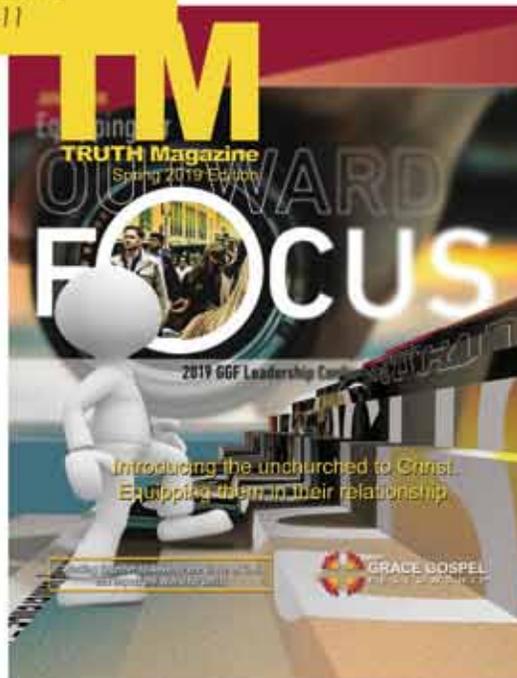
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April-June 2019

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TRUTH Magazine, published quarterly, with an emphasis on the doctrines of the dispensation of Grace. This is achieved through Bible studies, articles of relevance in today's world, and news about Grace Gospel Fellowship (GGF), Grace Christian University, Grace Ministries International, Grace Publications, and other Grace organizations and churches.

The views and opinions expressed in the ads and articles are those of the authors and organizations. They do not necessarily reflect the views of GGF and/or the editorial staff of TRUTH.

PUBLISHED by  
Grace Gospel Fellowship, a nonprofit religious corporation, incorporated in the State of Michigan.

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 9432  
Grand Rapids, MI 49509

phone: 616-245-0100  
email: info@ggfusa.org  
website: ggfusa.org

TRUTH Magazine is the quarterly membership periodical of the GGF.  
Gift subscriptions can be purchased through the national office.

# READING ACTS IN EPHESUS

by Dr. Phillip J. Long  
Grace Christian University

In March 2018 I had the opportunity to visit biblical sites on the west coast of Turkey including the seven churches mentioned in Revelation and other locations from Paul's missionary journeys in Acts 13-20. The highlight of this tour was a visit to the city of Ephesus since it provides an opportunity to read the book of Acts in the place where the events took place.

Ephesus was the largest and most important city in Asia Minor and is central to Paul's missionary activity in Acts 19. Coming under Roman control in 133 B.C., Ephesus was a free city in the Roman senatorial province of Asia when Paul visited in A.D. 55-56. This meant Rome allowed the province of Asia to rule itself and the Emperor rarely interfered in local affairs. At the time of Paul's visit to the city the population was about 250,000, the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Ephesus was therefore a source of enormous wealth for the Empire and was a cultural and commercial center for western Asia. From Ephesus, Christianity spread to several other cities in Asia Minor, including Colossae, Hierapolis (Col. 4:13), Laodicea (Col. 4:15), and the churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3.



*Temple of Artemis in Ephesus*



*Agora where Paul would have worked as a tentmaker*

Although no synagogue has been excavated in Ephesus, the first century Jewish historian Josephus reports Ephesus had a large Jewish population. The only hint of a Jewish presence found so far is a small menorah carved into the steps of the Library of Celsus. Luke indicates there were many Jewish Christians doing ministry in Ephesus prior to Paul's arrival. In Acts 18:18-19 Aquila and Priscilla reason with Jews at the synagogue in Ephesus, in 18:24-26 they meet Apollos and explain Paul's gospel to him, and in Acts 19:1-7 Paul encounters 12 disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus.

### ***Public Meetings in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)***

After teaching in the local synagogue for three months, Paul takes his disciples and begins to teach in the "lecture hall of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:10). This is a rented room he likely used in the afternoon when most people took time off from work in the heat of the day. A small auditorium has been excavated near the Library of Celsus, although it is not certain this was the room Paul used. The library was built in A.D. 114-117 and façade from the original library has been reconstructed. This was one of the largest libraries in the ancient world, once housing as many as 12,000 scrolls.

Next to the Library of Celsus is the entrance to the 1200-square-foot agora where Paul would have worked as a tentmaker and likely held meetings in workshops. Built about A.D. 40, the Gate of Augustus features many Greek inscriptions, including a dedication to "Emperor Caesar Augustus, the son of the god, the greatest of the priests." Anyone entering the agora

would pass through this gate dedicated to the divine first Emperor of Rome.

Paul continued his teaching ministry in Ephesus for two years. This was a time when Paul was engaged in scholarship, letter writing, and public debate. It is likely Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthian church during this time.

### ***Great is Artemis! (Acts 19:23-41)***

In Acts 19:23-27, the silversmiths in Ephesus were concerned the Temple of Artemis was suffering economically because of the success of Paul's gospel in the city. The goddess Artemis, daughter of Zeus and the twin sister of Apollo, usually depicted with a bow and accompanied by deer, was extremely beautiful, although the statues of Artemis in the Ephesus Museum are abstract, portraying her as the queen of heaven.

The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. There were as many as thirty-three other temples of Artemis in the ancient world, but the one at Ephesus was by far the greatest, making the city a major destination for religious tourists. Ancient temples were also financial institutions, so the Temple of Artemis was an economic hub for the region. The Temple of Artemis was four times the size of the Parthenon, with 127 marble columns sixty feet high. Unfortunately, not much remains of the temple of Artemis. In A.D. 268 it was sacked by the Goths and by the early 400s the Temple was finally destroyed. All that remains is the foundation of the building and a single reconstructed column.

Although Ephesus worshiped many other gods, Artemis was considered the city's chief god. An inscription found in Ephesus calls her "the goddess who rules our city." The temple hosted festivals and processions during the month of Artemision. The image of Artemis would have been adorned beautifully and carried through the city accompanied by priests and worshipers.

If the temple was a financial center, as well as religious, then the threat to Ephesus is not entirely theological. The city may lose a great deal of income if too many people convert to Christianity. Demetrius the silver-smith agitated his fellow craftsmen and a huge mob sweeps through the agora and into the theater, shouting "great is Artemis" for two hours (19:28-29). This theater has been beautifully reconstructed and is the highlight of any visit to Ephesus. It is one of the largest theaters in the ancient world, originally seating up to 25,000 people.

It was the city clerk who calmed the crowd and convinced them to stop their illegal riot (19:35-41). In his speech, he seems to agree with Paul—if gods are made by hand then, they are not really gods. But Artemis "fell from heaven." This may imply the original Ephesian Artemis was fashioned from a meteorite (which may account for the shape of the image now in the museum at Ephesus).

Reading Acts 19 while walking through the streets of ancient Ephesus illuminates our understanding of the events of this important chapter of Acts. Not only are we able to see the events in our minds more clearly, but we understand the complex relationship of social and cultural factors which led to the success of the gospel in one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. ■



Phillip J. Long is Professor of Biblical Studies at Grace Christian University and teaching pastor at Rush Creek Bible Church in Byron Center, Michigan. He maintains a popular blog, *ReadingActs.com*. For more information about joining the Missionary Journeys of Paul tour in March 2020, write to [plong@gracechristian.edu](mailto:plong@gracechristian.edu).

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# How Do We Hear God in this Noisy Fast-paced World?

by Ken Bruce Kemper  
President  
Grace Christian University

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“Turn right in one mile.”

“Recalculating.”

“Make a U-turn at the next opportunity.”

Most of us are familiar with GPS. The Global Positioning System (GPS) gives us clear instructions to navigate from our present location to another when we enter its coordinates into the system. Most of us have become accustomed to using these devices for guidance and direction. What if daily, or in response to prayer, we were able to hear the voice of the Lord just as clearly?

“Sell your home in three months and move across the state.”

“Take the position at the church or organization.”  
“Do NOT go on a date with that man, or even respond to his text messages!”

This GPS would be “God Personally Speaking,” or “Gradually Perceiving (the) Spirit.” Oh, how nice that would be for all of us desiring God’s direction. Yet, it is possible to hear the voice of God and receive direction—but it is not a technology or device to be used—rather, it is a relationship and a lifestyle to be lived. God’s desires are for His followers to order their lives in such a way that He may grow them and bless them as they navigate the challenges of life in dependence upon Him.

The God of the Bible is a God who does speak and reveal Himself to those with hearts which seek Him,

as well as ears and minds which desire to comprehend His voice and promptings.

## ***The Biblical Record of God Giving Vision and Direction***

The Old Testament is full of examples of individuals who were not only called by God to follow His leading, but were also called to lead and give vision to others. Moses encountered God at the burning bush (Exodus 3, 4). He humbly conversed with God and was used to free the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, lead them through the wilderness, and repeatedly met with God and instructed others. Other familiar Old Testament examples include Jonah, Gideon, and Balaam who were instructed in phenomenal ways specific to their situation; including the altering of the natural world by the Creator to clearly direct, when the recipient was slow to listen or obey. There are many more examples from which we could gain insight into how God works, but for the sake of brevity, this article will focus on a few examples from Acts and the Pauline letters. (In the Gospels, Jesus was physically present and communicating by actions, stories, and words to those present.)

## ***God’s Leading in the Acts Period***

In Acts, Saul was on the way to Damascus when he was blinded by a great light from heaven. In response, Saul humbled himself and was ministered to by Ananias, who delivered God’s vision to Saul for his life to be an instrument of God to the Gentiles (Acts 9:3-17). Saul was given clear instructions by Ananias who told

him to “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17) as a necessary complement to the communication of this message from God. In the midst of dramatic changes in the mid-Acts period, God used the dreams of Cornelius and of Peter (Acts 10) to open their eyes and communicate an important change in the plan of God to include Gentiles. Both dreams of a new type of ministry were affirmed with obedient actions of belief, then later, confirmed by signs of the Holy Spirit.

An example which we might more readily identify with today is found in Acts 15. The Jerusalem Council met to consider if there was, in fact, a new vision of outreach to the Gentiles, and if it were truly from God. In this meeting men came together to consider the Lord’s leading; they concluded that the evidence of God’s leading was the Holy Spirit’s work among the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-21). It is significant to note that as the apostles and elders gathered to make this decision, they chose some men among them to communicate this to Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:22, 23). They expressed in their letter, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28). This is a powerful phrase to describe the results of a meeting that demonstrated their perception of the Holy Spirit’s clear directional change going forward. This was then to be the future direction, or vision, for the church as the apostles and elders believed God desired it to be.

The leaders of the church in Antioch gathered together to seek God’s direction as they worshiped and fasted. In this setting, the Holy Spirit communicated a vision for ministry by directing them to, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I called them” (Acts 13:1-2). In obedience to the Holy Spirit’s leading, the church continued to fast and pray, placed their hands on them, and sent them off (Acts 13:3). Once again, there is significance to the process of seeking directions from the Lord and the resulting vision and action.

An interesting account of God’s communication to the Apostle Paul takes place in Acts 16, when Paul and his companions were traveling and ministering throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, “...having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (Acts 16:6b, 7). This account does not describe the method God used to communicate with Paul, Silas, and Timothy, but it ap-

pears as though God used circumstances or obstacles in their path which they prayerfully accepted as God’s specific diversion of the ministry team to other places. This account is both mysterious and instructive as an example of how God may work in our lives and ministries. He may impede our desired direction to allow us to be open to His leading in another way. Immediately following this account is the “Macedonian Call.” Paul received specific instructions in a supernatural vision; and it seems that the previous day’s prompting of direction allowed for Paul to respond as he clearly had a “God Personally Speaking” (GPS) message.

As Paul continued to minister and travel, he also received visions from the Lord to direct his work. In Corinth, the Lord spoke to him in a vision: “Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10). God gave assurance and instruction for ministry and peace of mind to Paul who obediently “stayed for a year and half, teaching them the Word of God” (Acts 18:11). Later, Paul was resolutely en route to Jerusalem with a vision to be there by the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). He informed those who tried to dissuade him that “the Holy Spirit had warned him that in every city... prison and hardships are facing him” (Acts 20:22-24). No doubt he had been given clear instructions by the Holy Spirit, which he told to the others. To Paul, these dreams and instructions were compelling and obligatory, not simply suggestions. Even as Agabus the prophet prophesied Paul’s bondage ahead (Acts 21:10-14), he responded that his vision was clear, and he would follow it to Jerusalem.

Once back in Jerusalem and in bondage, Paul was given comfort and vision from God who told him, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jeru-

*“He may impede our desired direction to allow us to be open to His leading in another way.”*

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“ If we are unable to quiet ourselves before God, be in His Word regularly, and be still in seeking God, it is highly unlikely we will hear His voice or whisper in the midst of the fray. ”

saalem, so you must also testify in Rome” (Acts 23:11). In dependence upon the Lord, Paul endured hardship. Knowing God’s direction and vision for his life, Paul appealed to Caesar when he stood before Festus (Acts 25:11). God comforted Paul in this way so that even when shipwrecked en route to Rome, he knew that God desired him to “stand trial before Caesar” (Acts 27:23-24). In Paul’s example we learn that the clarity of God’s direction emboldens and allows for endurance of the obstacles which would dissuade our obedience. It is understood that these last examples were supernatural revelations in nature and are not as easy to relate to us as the believers or leaders of today. The point is not to attempt to replicate biblical or historical supernatural visions or dreams, rather it is to understand how the Bible gives examples of men, women, and groups who heard the voice of God, then set vision and plans to do God’s will. It is also an attempt to discern theological perspective and insight into how God gives direction according to these examples.

### ***Transferable Principles for Hearing God’s Voice***

Space does not permit the exploration of the Pauline Epistles in this article, but it will be considered in a future article. This abbreviated biblical analysis of God’s examples of leading His people with direction, vision for action, and growth flows soundly out of His redemptive purposes in the world, and ultimately serves to glorify God. In the Old and New Testaments, God communicates to people who were dedicated to the Lord and were soundly seeking to honor Him.

These individuals displayed both a humble and worshipful attitude toward God. This is so helpful for us today in understanding the disposition of one who would clearly hear the voice of God in this noisy world. If we are unable to quiet ourselves before God, be in His Word regularly, and be still in seeking God, it is highly unlikely we will hear His voice or whisper in the midst of the fray. It is at this point – if God really wants to get our attention – He may use circumstances, pain, or other people to interrupt our self-directed lives. Also, it is important to learn from these examples that those receiving direction from God moved with immediacy to obey and strived resolutely to respond. The voice of God supplies assurance and direction to people in Scripture who received it, whether individually or as a group. These people had solidity of purpose based on the character of God and their dedication to His leading. Let us be inspired by the biblical record of God communicating to move leaders and others toward a future which is purposeful is compelling. It is quite worthy of our humble consideration in our actions and attitudes.

We can hear God’s voice in this noisy world. The examples of God speaking in Scripture are not just historically isolated instances, but helpful guides for our learning. If, in humility, we open the Word of God, our ears, and our minds to His voice as we bring our decisions before Him in prayer we may hear the leading of the Holy Spirit. It may be God will speak through other godly individuals, or circumstances, or nudging which assure us of what He desires as well as what He does not desire. Are we listening? ■



# God Calls His People to Get the Work Done

by Jeremy Clark  
Executive Director  
Grace Ministries International, Inc.

*Top row (left to right): 1) The first class in the new training center in Bolivia; 2) moms near Ngala; 3) and the Honduras survey team. Bottom row (left to right): 4) Sack races with the children in Mbewa, Malawi; 5) the congregation meeting in the new church building in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay; 6) and when presented with a challenge, the Lord moves when His people recognize they must carry the burden to meet the need. More children meet as their parents realize our missionaries are not bloodsuckers.*

That Israel, God’s chosen nation, was disobedient throughout the story of the Bible is hardly news. When they chose to obey, it makes us pay attention. From the time God elected Moses to lead His people out of Egypt they showed contempt for His authority. A quick perusal of just the Book of Exodus punctuates, among other acts of disobedience, their rejection of Moses’ leadership (Exodus 5:21), a lack of faith in the God who made the waters to quench their thirst (15:24, 17:3), a refusal to observe the Sabbath (16:27), and an arrogance believing they could create a god more worthy of their worship than the Living God Who created them (32:1-8). Though on the verge of destroying this people, the Lord relented and let them live (32:9-14).

The Israelites had not done a whole lot to inspire confidence as they meandered through the wilderness on their elongated trek to Canaan. Thus, when presented with a directive to give towards and take part in the construction of the tabernacle a positive response probably did not seem a likely outcome to Moses. The Lord commanded the children of Israel through Moses that they would take up “an offering to the LORD.” God wanted those “of a willing heart” to bring their gold, silver, fine cloths, fabrics, and other valuable possessions “as an offering to the LORD” (35:5-8). With those

materials, He exhorted “all who are gifted artisans” to “come and make all that the Lord has commanded” including the tabernacle, its furnishings and accessories (35:10-18).

Presented with this challenge, it was fortunate Israel was not a republic or, worse, a democracy. Authority always flows from God down upon whom He chooses to devolve it charging rulers with the responsibility of governing according to His righteousness (Romans 13:1-5). It never flows from man upwards towards God. If the latter were true, consider how Israel might have responded. After the majority affirmed that God’s suggestion was indeed an idea worth giving a shot, the question would then have become how to implement it. In the 1880s economist and social theorist William Graham Sumner articulated the easy way out in his essay, “The Forgotten Man.” Simply stated, persons A and B get together recognizing problem X or even the perceived need of a person X. Because A and B constitute a majority, they can saddle person C, the “forgotten man,” with the expense and burden of solving or funding the solution to the crisis or whim of the day.

To excise the materials from the people and employ the craftsmen necessary to build the tabernacle, the easy way out would have been for the majority

to require the minority to pay for it. All the while the majority would have felt good about itself for agreeing that God had a noble idea and that they were able to make it a reality. However, God communicated His commandment to the children of Israel through the leader He chose to collect an offering of the willing. Given that it was God's request, needing no man's approval, the people had a simple choice as to whether they would obey the Lord or not. They could not say this was Moses' command or an ill-conceived law created by their neighbors wishing to lord it over them. It was God's word spoken through Moses they were obligated to observe. If they chose to disobey, they would have had to disregard God and His authority from above.

Reaching the world with the gospel is a task the Lord has entrusted to those in the Body of Christ as He entreats the willing (2 Corinthians 9:7). We are either sending or we are sent. Indifference to the plight of the lost is not an option. The Apostle Paul makes this clear asking, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14-15a). How do we respond to this challenge? Do we cast the responsibility of sending or being sent onto others saying missions is for those whom we deem wealthy enough to send or for those whom we consider spiritual enough to go? By doing so we effectively shift the financial burden to others and we may very well stunt our own spiritual growth reserving the highest level of spirituality for those who are sent. In actuality, our inaction will leave much of the work undone which could and should be done.



*The congregation in the new building in Paraguay*

God did not say how much each Israelite should have given, but described the goal or what the finished product would look like upon completion. When Moses consulted the artisans working on the tabernacle he learned that the freewill offerings given each morning were "more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded" them to do (Exodus 36:3-5). In response, Moses directed the people to stop giving (36:6). Because of Moses' experience leading this people, surely he was surprised and overjoyed all at once.

***We are either sending or we are sent. Indifference to the plight of the lost is not an option.***

The tabernacle was, in part, symbolic of God's presence among Israel and a mobile rallying point where the people could offer their ceremonial worship to the One Who led them out of Egypt (25:8-9, 25:42). It was a piece in the overall plan the Lord had for this nation as He desired to reach the world through them as His kingdom of priests or intermediaries between Himself and the rest of the nations (19:5-6, Isaiah 56:6-7, 59:20-60:3, Zechariah 8:23). Though Israel stumbled bringing salvation to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11-15), God still desires that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and that we, the Body of Christ, take part in this. He does not tell us how many missionaries to send or how much to give. In fact, when Jesus sent out 70 to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He said this still was not enough (Luke 10:1-2).

Grace Ministries International is part of the effort to share God's saving grace with the world. Just as the description of the tabernacle set a practical and temporal goal for Israel, our goals are to open eight new fields and recruit a total of 26 U.S.-based and international missionaries to serve on established and new

fields by the year 2023. While on track to reach our *Vision 2023* goals because you have generously given of your resources and of yourselves, what if we had more than enough people and funds to reach these goals? We could then respond to one of the most common questions or challenges we receive: Why don't you have any missionaries in countries X, Y and Z? We would not stop at just eight new fields, but continue to open even more!

Having sent missionaries to places like Bonaire, Nicaragua, and Paraguay over the last few years, we plan to open Mozambique and Panama in 2019 while targeting Burundi for 2020. When adopting *Vision 2023* with its ambitious goals back in 2013, we wondered how the Lord would provide and perhaps even pondered what failure would look like. Maybe our "tabernacle" would be a little smaller and less ornate than we hoped. However, we are seeing His faithfulness working through you, His people.

On a macro scale, we are encouraged by our progress towards *Vision 2023*. On our individual fields we see how the Lord is expanding our ministries beyond what our missionaries could have expected. GMI missionary Frosty Hansen and the Grace Bible Center team in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, offered their first module in January with over 30 students signing up for classes which nearly doubled the number they were expecting. Having recently moved to a new location in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, the missionary team is elated that over 70 have attended Sunday services. In Malawi last Easter, GMI missionary Sue Vinton and a team of Malawians first visited the village of Mbewa near the



*Children's ministry in Mbewa near the foot of a mountain called Ngala*

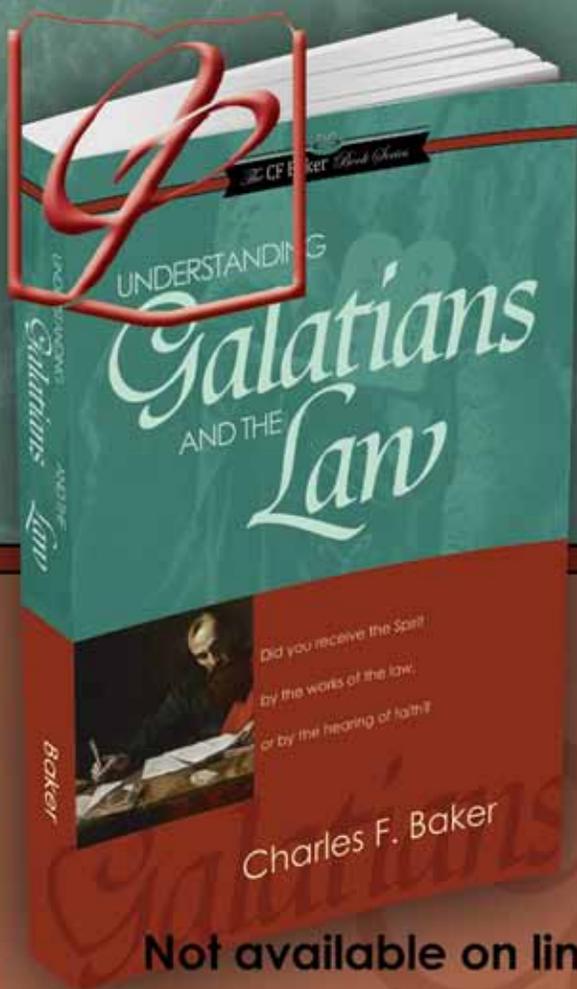
## “What are you doing to reach the world for Christ?”

foot of a mountain called Ngala to work with children at the insistence of the newly formed church there affiliated with GMI. At first, few children came as the people tended to believe rumors that the foreigners in this team were really blood suckers. Nearly a year later, over 100 kids and youth attend these regular meetings where the ministry team teaches about God's character and interaction with man through chronological Bible studies.

When presented with a challenge, the Lord moves when His people recognize they must carry the burden to meet the need. Oftentimes, taking on a burden comes in the form of abstract concepts like perseverance, faithfulness, prayer, and diligence which are not quantifiable. Carrying the burden of missions belongs to all of us. If we believe this, more will be sent. If we do not believe this, at the most we will hope others will carry out the work of missions while we sit on the sidelines.

What are you doing to reach the world for Christ? In January, GMI missionaries Emiliano and Raquel Seravalli and Matt and April Sykes, along with my son Jason and I walked the streets of the towns of Paraíso and Danlí, Honduras, for a couple of days wondering and researching what it would be like to send missionaries to this country. How would we get established? How would we generate contacts and build relationships? How could we best share the gospel and plant churches which faithfully teach the Word of God?

These questions are just academic exercises until you, God's people, go and send in such a manner that it is "sufficient for all the work to be done" (Exodus 36:7). For the construction of the tabernacle, indeed, the people brought more than what was needed. To reach the world, we are still a long way off from ever being able to make that claim, but why not live the rest of our lives in the Lord trying to finish the work? ■



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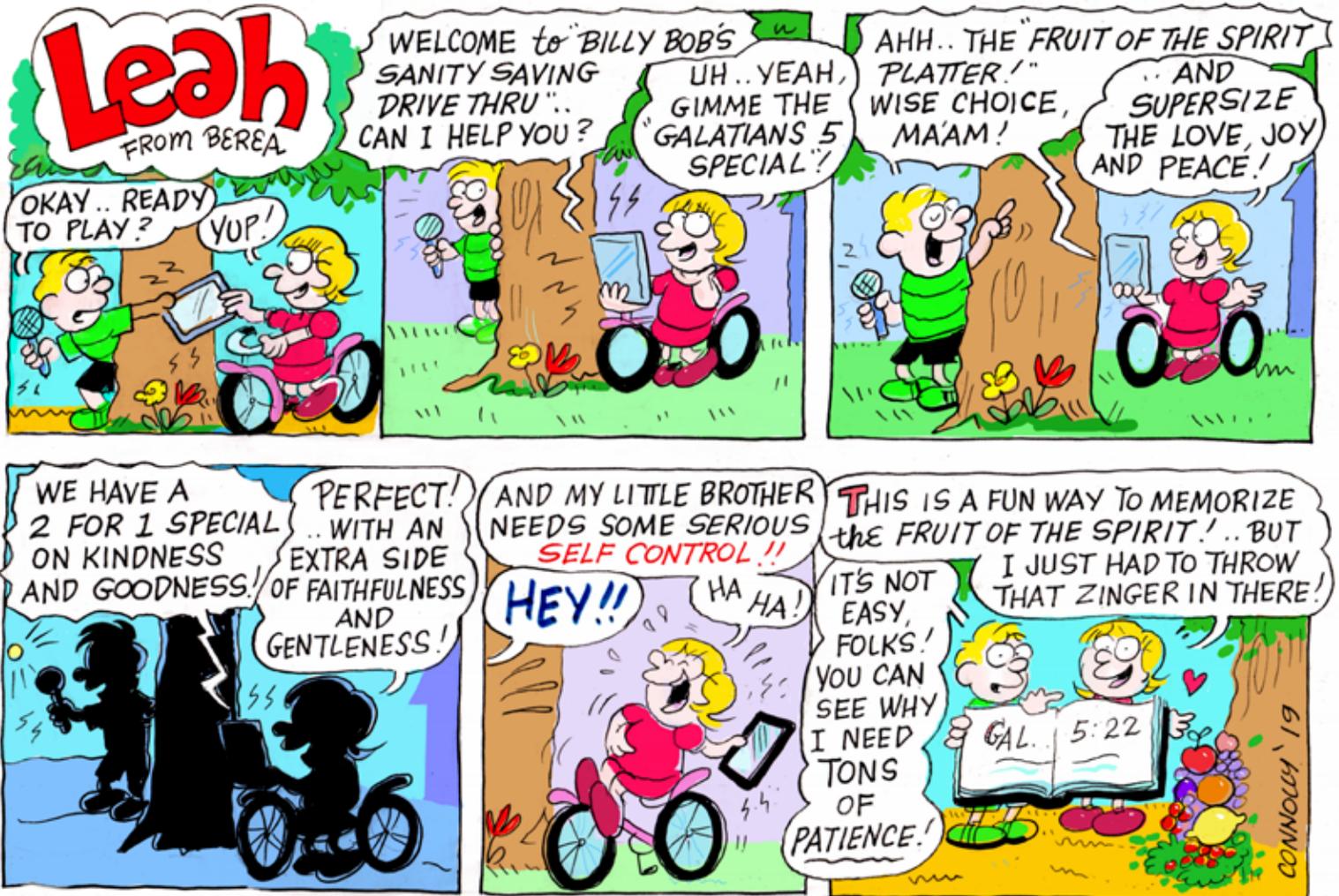
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THE DOCTRINE OF

# Salvation

THE PROVISION  
THE APPLICATION  
THE OUTWORKING

by Dr. Samuel Vinton  
Former Exec. Dir. Grace Ministries Int'l  
Instructor at Grace Christian University

In the first part of the “application of salvation” (*Winter 2019 TRUTH*) we answered the question: *What must I do to be saved?* In this second part we will answer the question: *What does God do when a person believes in Christ?*

This second aspect of becoming a child of God through faith in Christ is what actually happens when a sinner is saved. In his book, *Practical Christian Theology*, Floyd H. Barackman speaks of the components of salvation. According to Barackman, “The components of salvation are the various parts or aspects of it that gospel believers receive when they are saved” (page 348). It is not possible to list all that God does the moment we pass from death unto life and become a new creation in Christ (John 5:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17) but we can list and define some of the major things that do happen. In this study we examine seven of these wonderful ways in which the Triune God applies Christ’s salvific work to believing sinners when they are brought into the family of God.

● **Regeneration - (John 3:3; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; James 1:18)**

According to Ephesians 2:1, 5, we were all dead (spiritually) in our transgressions. Therefore, what we needed was spiritual life. We needed to be regenerated to be born again. Regeneration, therefore, is the work of the Holy Spirit in imparting life to those who trust Christ as Savior. The word “regeneration” is used twice in the Greek New Testament. The first usage is found in Matthew 19:28 where it is translated “re-

newal of all things” in the NIV (“regeneration” in the KJV and NASB). In this verse the Lord Jesus promises His disciples that when He sets up the millennial kingdom, He will sit on His glorious throne and they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 20:1-6). The second time the word is used is in Titus 3:5 where Paul states that salvation is not by human effort but by the washing of rebirth (regeneration) and renewal of the Holy Spirit. In the context of salvation “regeneration” is the impartation of spiritual life to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior from sin. This new life is eternal. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the Apostle Paul states that “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.” Another way of understanding the phrase “the new creation comes” is “that person is a new creation.” With salvation comes new life because we are saved “through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). According to Buswell, “That regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, applying to us the benefits of the atonement, is the uniform teaching of the Scripture... Since the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God in His work of regeneration as well as in His work of conviction, it is no contradiction to speak of the Word itself as the efficient cause of regeneration” (J. Oliver Buswell, *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, p. 173). See 1 Peter 1:23 and James 1:18.

● **Forgiveness - (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13)**

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning and releasing (taking away) the guilt and sin of the person who be-

believes the gospel of Christ. Forgiveness is the negative aspect (taking away something - sin) whereas justification is the positive aspect (adding something – righteousness). In Colossians 2:13-14 we read that, “When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” What a wonderful and gracious God we have whose love is so great that, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:12).

“No voluminous system of theology could comprehend the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ, but in the word ‘forgiveness’ it is more fully comprehended than in any other human formula. When the Son of God, being hanged on a gibbet of shame by the sons of men, said, ‘Father, forgive them,’ instead of saying ‘Angelic hosts, destroy them,’ He did, in the clearest imaginable way, substitute Himself for the sinners, and bore their sin ‘in His own body on the tree.’ What a wonderful Saviour!” (Buswell, *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Volume 2, pp. 76-77). This truth has a powerful application to Christians. Just as God forgave us, we are to forgive each other (Eph. 4:32).

● **Justification (Romans 3:24-28, 5:1; Galatians 2:16)**

Justification is the act of God whereby He declares righteous the person who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. This act declares the believer to be “right” with God and is a judicial declaration that assures the one who trusts in Christ a righteous standing before God. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, Jesus Christ, who had no sin, was made to be sin for us [was made to be a sin offering] so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. If the righteousness we have is from God, it must be a 100% righteousness—a perfect righteousness—the only kind of righteousness that will permit us to enter into God’s presence. In Romans 5:1 the Apostle Paul states that “since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. What a glorious position is ours before the Father.

● **Sanctification - (Acts 20:32, 26:18; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10, 14)**

Since the word “sanctification” is rarely used in ordinary conversation today, many Bible translations now use the word “holiness” in its place. We define

the term as the act of the Holy Spirit whereby the believing sinner is “set apart” for God’s use and to a life of holiness. This is known as positional sanctification—the once-for-all work done by the Holy Spirit. “And by that will, we have been made holy [sanctified] through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Because we have been sanctified God addresses us as saints—not because of our behavior, but because of our position in Christ. This is why the Apostle Paul can call the Christians in Corinth “saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2), even though their lifestyle was reprehensible. This positional sanctification is in contrast to progressive sanctification which is the process that takes place throughout our Christian life when we are being made holy [sanctified] and are becoming more and more Christlike (Hebrews 10:14). We will discuss progressive sanctification in the third aspect of salvation that we call the OUTWORKING of salvation.

● **Baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)**

This work of the Holy Spirit unites the believer in Christ and with Christ and places the believer into His body, the church (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3, 4). In the epistles of the Apostle Paul we read close to 100 times that the Christian is “IN” Christ or IN Him. See Baker (*Dispensational Theology*, pp. 435-441) where he discusses our UNION and IDENTIFICATION with Christ that encompasses what this work of the Holy Spirit is all about.

In his book, *The Baptism & Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Merrill F. Unger makes the following statements:

“Six passages from the epistles refer to the baptism of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12-13; Ephesians 4:5; and 1 Peter 3:21. Of these, the Corinthians passage is the most important, both because it clearly refers to Spirit baptism and it treats the subject comprehensively.”

“To the Apostle Paul was given the distinctive revelation of the church as the Body of Christ formed by the Spirit’s baptizing work” (p. 95). Dr. Unger goes on to list the following six significant truths regarding the baptism by the Holy Spirit:

“(1) Baptism as used by Paul in connection with the Holy Spirit has the distinctive meaning of bringing the believer into organic union with Christ through power capable of effecting a vital change in the believer.

(2) The baptism of the Spirit is the ground of the oneness of all believers in Christ.

(3) The agent of the baptism of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself.

(4) The baptism of the Spirit is universal among believers.

(5) The baptism of the Spirit makes possible the filling of the Spirit.

(6) The baptism of the Spirit is unique among the Spirit's ministries.

The oneness of the believer with the Lord is emphatically "by one Spirit...into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13) "by one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) (pp. 96-103).

● ***Indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT – (Romans 5:5, 8:9; Ephesians 4:30)***

In this Dispensation of Grace, at the moment of regeneration, the Holy Spirit makes His residence in every believer (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19) from where He guides and empowers them in their daily walk. This indwelling is universal (every believer is indwelt) and permanent (the Holy Spirit will never leave the believer). According to Ephesians 4:30 believers are sealed unto the day when they received their glorified bodies. What a wonderful guarantee this is. Ephesians 1:14-15 puts it this way: "...When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."

● ***Eternal Security - (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 4:30)***

Eternal security means that once sinners believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are regenerated (born again) they receive at that moment the free gift of salvation from God. This gift is by grace through faith. It is not earned. It is also the gift of eternal life. The words gift, grace, and eternal confirm that salvation is something God does to the believing sinners when He places them into His family as His children. Therefore, this relationship of God the Father with believers who are His children can never be broken. This is why we hold the position that a regenerated person is eternally secure in Christ Jesus.

We will use two lines of proof to show why those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior cannot lose their salvation once they have received it from God. These two lines of proof are: (1) theological and

(2) biblical affirmations. We will look at the theological proofs for eternal security based on the doctrines concerning God and Christ.

*(a) Based on the doctrine of God*

First, God's attribute of faithfulness to His promise (2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 13:5-6) confirms the eternity of our salvation, and so does His omnipotence (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39). Secondly, the doctrine of God affirms that His work (what He does) is good (Ecclesiastes 3:14) and eternal (John 5:24, 10:28-29; Philippians 1:6).

*(b) Based on the doctrine of Christ*

First, our eternal salvation is based on the Person of Jesus Christ (who He is). He is our life (Colossians 3:4) and our life is in Him (Colossians 3:3). Secondly, our salvation is assured to be eternal by the provision of the Lord Jesus since the redemption He provides is eternal (Hebrews 9:12). Thirdly, our eternal security is guaranteed by the high priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ since "he is able to save completely [forever] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 9:23-28).

We could continue this line of proof with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of salvation, and the doctrine of the church, but space does not permit at this time.

In conclusion, therefore, let us use the second line of proof, which is the direct statement of Scripture. The following small sample of verses should cause us to rejoice in the full, complete, and eternal salvation that God gave to us the moment we were regenerated by the Holy Spirit. From the assurance we receive let us live holy and godly lives and devote ourselves to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

We will quote several verses from the small sample listed below. Be encouraged to read them from your Bible.

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6) (1) John 3:16; (2) Romans 8:38-39; (3) Ephesians 1:14, 4:30; (4) Hebrews 7:25; (5) Hebrews 13:5-6; (6) John 5:24; (7) Romans 8:1, 30-34; (8) John 5:24. ■

# A STORY ABOUT THE POTS AND PANS

## or What good is your theology?

by Craig MacDonald



Sarah Wilson and her husband Bob live on Palmetto Circle in an Anderson Builders home. They chose the two-story Santa Fe model, a three-bedroom, three-bath home with an attached two-car garage. They opted for the bonus room and the faux-stone fascia on the front side of the house.

When thinking about setting up her kitchen, Sarah decided to get new cookware. She chose Le Creuset, considered by many to be the best money can buy, and bought a full set of cast iron enameled pots and pans in cerise, a bright red. Sarah displays her Le Creuset cookware hanging from a modern red rack attached to her kitchen ceiling. The visual effect is striking and the eye of anyone going into her kitchen is immediately drawn to the pots and pans arranged from left to right according to pot type and size. Sarah makes sure anyone who comes to their home sees her kitchen and hears about the Le Creuset cookware. Sarah eagerly tells them about the cast iron core with thick ceramic coating. The interior is sand colored so what's cooking can be seen clearly. The ceramic both inside and outside of the pots and pans is among the

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thickest in the industry and the handles are both ergonomic and heat resistant. Each item in the expensive set is perfectly balanced making them easy to lift and tilt for pouring.

In the three years they've lived in the home Sarah has never once used her expensive cookware to do any cooking. She's never fried an egg in any of the three fry pans or made a stew in either of the Dutch ovens. The saucepans have never even had cold water in them. The entire set went directly from box to rack and is taken down only for dusting. As odd as it seems, it has never occurred to Sarah to actually use her cookware set for cooking. She's proud to own her Le Crueset, eager to tell others all about it, and has been known to stand and stare into her kitchen admiring the full set hanging from the ceiling. But use it for cooking? Sarah has never even thought about that possibility.

Around the corner from the Wilsons on Willow St. another Santa Fe model home was sold to Tiffany and Joe Perkins. They chose to have a fourth bedroom and the red brick exterior. Because Tiffany is just about the most frugal person you can imagine, she stocked her pots and pans cupboard with a mix of used cookware from thrift stores and garage sales. Some are aluminum, some cast iron, and some enameled. A couple of the pots are dented, others have cracked handles, and the two enameled pieces are chipped inside and out. Tiffany is a wonderful cook and turns out fantastic meals that are the envy of her friends. The Perkins often host dinner parties and guests almost always ask for the recipe of whatever tasty dish they've just eaten so they can make it themselves. Tiffany willingly gives out her recipes, which in turn leads to a second generation of guests asking for the recipe, and then a third. Three years later people all across town are using Tiffany's recipes to turn out great meals.

Tiffany isn't embarrassed by her odd mix of obviously used pots and pans. For her, cookware is for cooking, and as long as it does that job well she doesn't care what it looks like.

Alas, not everything she makes turns out well. Last week she decided to make a dessert for the first time that included a ganache icing made by precisely melting chocolate in cream that is then cooled very slowly. The result is a glossy hard icing. The double boiler in Tiffany's mixed cookware set doesn't fit well in any of her saucepans and while she was busy preparing the

bouillabaisse the pan she was using for the ganache boiled dry. The chocolate burned and stuck to the bottom of the double boiler making a mess that was never going to turn into a ganache. Tiffany quickly made a blueberry pie that her guests loved.

Last month Sarah and Tiffany met on a Saturday morning at the neighborhood park. Sarah's oldest and Tiffany's middle child are in the same class at Rancho Elementary School, the two talked at a school function, and the result was a play date. The moms had been talking about 15 minutes when Sarah worked the conversation around to her Le Crueset cookware. Sarah is so proud of her pots and pans that she looks for opportunities to talk about them. Tiffany listened with something less than fascination and after several minutes interrupted to ask, "How well does it work for cooking?" Sarah got a slightly offended look on her face and explained that she'd never actually used her Le Crueset for cooking. That thought had never occurred to her.

"How do you and your family eat?" Tiffany asked.

"We go out two or three times a week, we order in for a couple of dinners, and for the rest I usually serve something like a rotisserie chicken from Safeway."

Tiffany followed with a question about breakfast and lunch.

Sarah explained that they had either cold cereal or yogurt and toast for breakfast and lunch was typically sandwiches and chips. "Sometimes I'll heat up hotdogs in the microwave."

"What cookware do *you* have?" Sarah asked Tiffany.

Feeling just a bit embarrassed she answered, "Oh, just a hodgepodge of things I've picked up over the years. Nothing as nice as yours." The look on Sarah's face when she heard this left Tiffany wondering if she was offended, disapproving, or both.

That was their one and only play date. Tiffany realized they came from very different worlds with equally different priorities. She went back to cooking wonderful meals and serving them to grateful guests. Sarah returned home, walked directly into her kitchen, stared at her neatly arranged Le Crueset cookware hanging from the ceiling and felt an even greater sense of pride over what she saw. At the same time she felt a little sorry for Tiffany and her cookware poverty. If only she would see the value in owning Le Crueset. ■



PROTECTION  
ONE  
Church Safety Initiative

# PROMOTING SAFETY IN THE CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

by Richard Carmichael  
Protection One Member

Safety in the church environment has taken on greater significance in today's society. Only a couple of generations ago locking doors, watching the hallways, and monitoring parking lots were mostly done to try to control misbehaving children. But now churches are being seen as easy targets by those who want to steal, hurt, or make a public statement of some kind through violence. We've all been saddened by the occasional reports of church shootings, but crime on church properties has actually been increasing at an alarming rate over the past twenty years. One of the primary sources for statistical information regarding this can be found at [www.carlchinn.com](http://www.carlchinn.com).

Last year, in an effort to support the work of cultivating healthy environments and healthy churches, the Grace Gospel Fellowship (GGF) stepped forward and initiated a new ministry called *Protection One*. Designed to help churches begin the process of forming a safety team ministry, Protection One is presented in a one-day seminar format by volunteers currently involved in safety and protection within the church.

The team currently consists of Dr. Scott Shaw from Grace Christian University; Jon Young and myself from

Grace Bible Fellowship in Jenison, Michigan; and Matt Amundsen from the GGF. The topics covered in the seminar include steps to *forming your team*, selecting the right people, conducting a *risk assessment* of the ministry, writing *policies and procedures*, training for *response in a crisis*, and issues involved in *child protection*. There is also a *hands-on* session included on situational awareness and non-lethal protection using common everyday items. In addition to seminar notebooks, each church represented also receives a copy of the book *Defending The Flock* by Kris Moloney of Sheepdog Church Security.

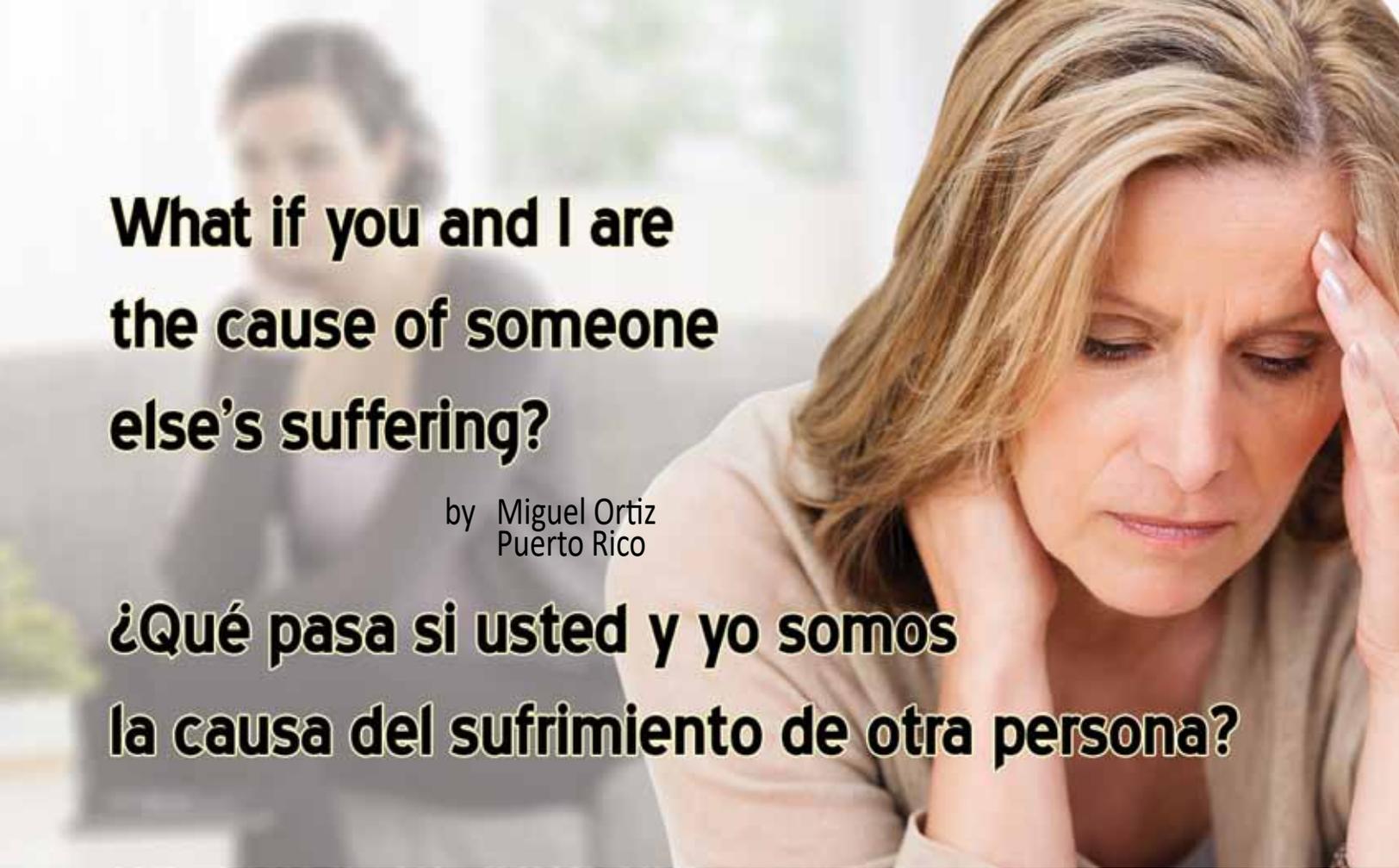
After our initial seminar in May of 2018 in Muskegon, Michigan, the team was invited to go to Grace Bible Church of Phoenix, Arizona. We are grateful to both hosting churches for the welcoming environment and enthusiasm from the participants. The Protection One ministry is growing, and while we remain an ongoing resource for those who have completed it, the GGF wants to make it available to all affiliated churches across the country. Please contact Matt Amundsen at the GGF office if your church or region is interested in getting started with this very important ministry. ■



The Protection One Team



A Protection One seminar in Phoenix, AZ



# What if you and I are the cause of someone else's suffering?

by Miguel Ortiz  
Puerto Rico

## ¿Qué pasa si usted y yo somos la causa del sufrimiento de otra persona?

**O**ne Sunday, after a message about suffering, I asked the congregation: “What if you and I are the cause of someone’s suffering?” Total silence.

The message was supposed to end right there with a question that everyone should meditate on, including me. It’s better or easier to talk about the things and circumstances that are making “us” suffer, but it’s not the same when we must consider the possibility that we may be the cause of pain, confusion, and sadness of a loved one, a family member, friend, or brother or sister in Christ. Let me clarify something—I’m not talking about the suffering we experience because of someone’s health issues, or maybe the loss of a job, or other possible circumstances that a person cannot control. I am talking about the suffering we cause, either on purpose or by negligence. Sadly, it happens more than we want to recognize.

The hardest step is to accept that we can be hurting someone. Psalms 139:23-24 says, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” We should practice constantly examining our lives. We need to analyze

Un domingo prediqué sobre el sufrimiento y le pregunté a la congregación: “¿Qué pasa si usted y yo somos la causa del sufrimiento de alguien?” Silencio total.

Se suponía que el mensaje terminara allí mismo, con una pregunta que todos deberían meditar sobre ella, incluyéndome a mí. Es mejor o más fácil hablar sobre las cosas y las circunstancias que nos hacen sufrir, pero no es lo mismo cuando tenemos que considerar la posibilidad de que podamos ser la causa del dolor, la confusión y la tristeza de un ser querido, un miembro de la familia, amigo, o hermano o hermana en Cristo. Déjame aclarar algo. No estoy hablando del sufrimiento que experimentamos debido a los problemas de salud de alguien, o tal vez la pérdida de un trabajo, u otras posibles circunstancias sobre las cuales la persona no tiene el control. Estoy hablando del sufrimiento que causamos, ya sea a propósito, o por negligencia. Lamentablemente, sucede más de lo que queremos reconocer.

Quizás el paso más difícil es aceptar que podemos lastimar a alguien. Salmos 139: 23-24 “Examíname, oh Dios, y sondea mi corazón; ponme a prueba y sondea mis pensamientos. Fíjate si voy por mal camino, y guíame por el camino eterno.” Debemos practicar

how we are living and how our relationships are with the people around us.

One obstacle that will interfere with the right examination of our conduct is pride—it tells God that we can handle things without Him and that others are the ones to blame for all our misfortunes. Pride, when it goes unchecked, hardens our hearts and can isolate us from noticing how others see us. On many occasions, people around us suffer because of our attitudes. Sadly, our actions can make others fear us. In certain cases, they are afraid to tell us because they fear our reaction. Many times, we wrongly describe or interpret it as “respect” toward us. How about our words? Words can cause damage like a bullet. James chapter 3 warns us of the danger our “tongue” can cause. When words come out of our mouths, especially when we are angry, there’s no way we can take them back. And then pride won’t let us ask for forgiveness. How different and blessed is humility.

***“God knows everything about us and knows the intentions of our heart (1 Samuel 16:7)”***

It’s sad when we hear someone say: “Well, this is the way I am, God made me like this.” At Eden, Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed both God and Eve because she offered the fruit to him, and God had created her (Genesis chapter 3). Adam conveniently put himself out of the equation. But he knew more than that and so should we. God cannot be fooled (Galatians 6:7). God knows everything about us and knows the intentions of our heart (1 Samuel 16:7). One is “the actions of someone who is not yet reconciled with God through faith in Christ.” Another is “the attitude of a member of the Body of Christ, a son of God saved and reconciled.” Christians can make others suffer. It’s a sad truth.

Can our attitudes change? Yes!! Our Savior specializes in changing people! When we believed in Christ as

constantemente el examinar nuestras vidas. Analizar cómo vivimos y cómo son nuestras relaciones con las personas que nos rodean.

Un obstáculo que interferirá con el correcto examen de nuestra conducta es el orgullo. El orgullo le dice a Dios que podemos manejar las cosas sin Él. Que los demás son los culpables de todas nuestras desgracias. El orgullo, cuando no se controla, endurece nuestros corazones y puede aislarnos de cómo los demás nos ven. En muchas ocasiones las personas que nos rodean sufren por nuestras actitudes. Tristemente nuestras acciones pueden hacer que otros nos tengan temor. Hasta tienen miedo de hacérselo saber porque temen a nuestra reacción. Y lo describimos o interpretamos como “respeto” hacia nosotros. ¿Qué hay de nuestras palabras? Las palabras pueden causar daño como una bala. El capítulo 3 de Santiago nos advierte del peligro que puede causar nuestra “lengua”. Después que las palabras salen de nuestra boca, especialmente cuando estamos enojados, no hay forma de que podamos recuperarlas. Y entonces el orgullo no nos deja pedir perdón. Qué diferente y bendita es la humildad.

Es triste cuando escuchamos a alguien decir: “Bueno, así soy, Dios me hizo así”. En Edén, Eva culpó a la serpiente, y Adán culpó a Dios y a Eva, porque ella le ofreció el fruto, y Dios la había creado (Génesis capítulo 3). Adán convenientemente se puso fuera de la ecuación. Pero él sabía más que eso, nosotros también deberíamos saber. Dios no puede ser engañado (Gálatas 6: 7). Dios sabe todo sobre nosotros y conoce las intenciones de nuestro corazón (1 Samuel 16: 7). Una cosa es las acciones de alguien que aún no se ha reconciliado con Dios a través de la fe en Cristo, otra es las actitudes de un miembro del Cuerpo de Cristo, un hijo de Dios salvo y reconciliado. Los cristianos pueden hacer sufrir a otros. Es una triste verdad. No debe ser así.

¿Pueden nuestras actitudes cambiar? ¡¡Sí!! Nuestro Salvador se especializa en cambiar a la gente. Cuando creímos en Cristo como nuestro Señor, un enorme proceso de cambio comenzó desde nuestro interior, y debería mostrarse en el exterior para que otros también lo puedan ver. En Filipenses 1: 7, nuestro Señor nos asegura que lo que Él comenzó en nosotros en el momento en que creímos, lo llevará a cabo hasta que estemos con Él en gloria. Por ejemplo, el capítulo 4 de Efesios y el capítulo 3 de Colosenses tienen instrucciones claras para todos nosotros sobre

***“If we need to ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt, or caused suffering, because we were senseless, or selfish, we should do it right away!”***

our Lord, a huge change process started to take place from within us, and it should show on the outside so others can see it too. In Philippians 1:7, our Lord assures us that what He started in us the second we believed, He will carry it out until we are with Him in glory. Ephesians chapter 4 and Colossians chapter 3 both have clear instructions for all of us on how we should live and treat others—how not to hurt or make others suffer because we are not being careful in letting the Holy Spirit work an amazing blessing in us: “...to be conformed to the image of His Son...” (Rom. 8:29). If Christ changed a man who hated Him and His followers, like Saul of Tarsus was, and transformed him into a follower of the Savior and defender of Christianity, a man who loved the ones he once despised; imagine what He can do in your life and mine! Let God examine our life, totally. That includes our feelings and our deepest thoughts. If we need to ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt, or caused suffering, because we were senseless, or selfish, we should do it right away! Our lives should reflect Christ’s character instead of causing fear. People should be giving praise to our Savior because of our testimony “...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” Philippians 1:11.

Why do we like movie characters like Shrek, the Grinch, and Ebenezer Scrooge? Well, all of them were difficult to love and understand because of their terrible attitudes and all the suffering they inflicted on others. But the moment they had a change of “heart,” everything was better for themselves and others, too. Life can be tough, and life experiences can affect the way we behave—that’s a fact. But it’s also a fact that God wants us to live life and relate to others the way He intended. His powerful Word is there for us to know His will for our lives. His love has been poured in our hearts thru His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) so we can love and forgive others. God’s grace can and will transform us for His glory! Let us ask our Lord in prayer to stop us from being the cause of suffering for anyone in our life. In Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. ■

cómo debemos vivir y tratar a los demás. Sobre cómo no lastimar, o hacer sufrir a los demás, no estamos teniendo el cuidado de dejar que el Espíritu Santo obre en nosotros una bendición asombrosa: “... para ser conformes a la imagen de Su Hijo...” (Romanos 8:29). Si Cristo cambió a un hombre que lo odiaba a Él y a Sus seguidores, como lo fue Saulo de Tarso, y lo transformó en un seguidor del Salvador y defensor del cristianismo, un hombre que amaba a los que una vez despreciaba; ¡imagina lo que puede hacer en tu vida y la mía! Deja que Dios examine nuestras vidas, totalmente. Eso incluye nuestros sentimientos y nuestros pensamientos más profundos. Si necesitamos pedir perdón a quienes hemos lastimado o causado sufrimiento, porque fuimos insensibles o éramos egoístas, ¡deberíamos hacerlo de inmediato! Nuestras vidas deben reflejar el carácter de Cristo. En lugar de temernos, las personas deben alabar a nuestro Salvador por nuestro testimonio “... llenos del fruto de justicia que se produce por medio de Jesucristo, para gloria y alabanza de Dios” Filipenses 1:11.

¿Por qué nos gustan personajes de películas como Shrek, Grinch y Ebenezer Scrooge? Bueno, todos ellos eran difíciles de amar y comprender debido a sus terribles actitudes y el sufrimiento que infligieron a los demás. Pero en el momento que tuvieron un cambio de “corazón”, todo fue mejor para ellos y para los demás también. La vida puede ser difícil, y las experiencias de vida pueden afectar la forma en que nos comportamos, eso es un hecho. Pero también es un hecho que Dios quiere que vivamos la vida y nos relacionemos con los demás a Su manera. Su poderosa Palabra está ahí para que conozcamos Su voluntad para nuestras vidas. Su amor se ha derramado en nuestros corazones a través de Su Espíritu Santo (Romanos 5:5) para que podamos amar y perdonar a los demás. ¡La gracia de Dios puede y nos transformará para Su gloria! Pidámosle a nuestro Señor en oración que nos impida ser la causa del sufrimiento para cualquier persona en nuestra vida. En el nombre de nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo oramos. Amén. ■



# Wonderful Words of Life

by Timothy McGarvey  
Executive Director  
Grace Publications, Inc.

As I sit behind the desk in my office at the church and look across the room, I see four bookcases filled with commentaries on every book of the Bible. I have dictionaries, concordances, encyclopedias, biographies and more—topical books on the wilderness Tabernacle and its furniture, creationism, church growth, and counseling. As I sit and look, I notice something else about all of those books. Like snowflakes, no two books are the same. But I am aware of another aspect of the books on the shelves. While almost all of them deal with theology, they certainly are not all in agreement as to what the Bible says.

Many years ago in a sermon I asked the people what they thought was the most important verse in the Bible. John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Timothy 2:15, and others were mentioned. When they had finished, I said that while all of those verses were important, the most important

verse was Genesis 1:1. I said that if we cannot believe that first verse to be true, then how could we depend on any verse that follows? The Bible is a wonderful book but it does not contain the Word of God. It IS the Word of God and as such is absolute truth from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse in Revelation. Quite often I listen to a program on the radio that answers callers questions about theology and the Bible. It is interesting that the man giving the answers will say, "We are under no obligation to believe that [what is written in the Bible]," when answering a question. Who makes that determination?

I recently had a conversation with a young man about the Bible and the creation account. He wondered if I took what the Bible says to be literal. In answer to his question I said this, "I believe that God is sovereign, eternally righteous, holy, and cannot sin. If God is to be God, then all He does must fall within

those boundaries. If he is anything else then He cannot, by definition, be God. If God would have wanted creation to take billions of year and used the process of biological evolution to create the universe, would He be any less a sovereign God?"

The young man said he would not. So I asked, "If He took billions of years through a means of biological evolution, but then lied and told us that He accomplished it all in six literal days, would that make Him a liar?"

He said, "It would."

So I responded with, "If He is a liar, then He is no longer an eternally righteous, holy God who cannot sin."

We serve a sovereign, righteous, holy God who cannot sin. He has given us a book that reveals even the deep, hidden things of God and His eternal purpose and plan (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Since it is His Word we are certainly under obligation to believe all that it says. It tells us how we got here and it tells us how we will leave.

Many years ago the hymn writer penned these words,

"Sing them over again to me,  
Wonderful words of life,  
Let me more of their beauty  
see,

Wonderful words of life;  
Words of life and beauty

Teach me faith and duty.  
Beautiful words, wonderful  
words,

Wonderful words of life." ■



## Region 4: Upper Midwest



*Grace Bible Church*, West Allis, WI—Winter will soon be releasing its grip on Wisconsin, but it has been an enjoyable journey through these past few months. We have established a new "Widow Care-Giving Team" in our congregation. We have 11 widows who have needs from time to time in their lives and we want to have a team of people to be there for them. We are excited to have a good number of people willing to be a part of these widows' lives and minister to them in any way we can.

We had an "informational congregation meeting" that complies with our new constitution and by-laws and we had a great time of interaction. The Board shared what has happened over the past year and then opened the meeting for a question and answer time. There were concerns and blessings that were shared. God has blessed us in so many ways and we are seeing spiritual growth as well as an intense desire to share the gospel with others. An evangelism seminar is being planned for later this spring to help them share their faith with others.

Also, you may pray with us as Pastor Floyd Baker, Jr. recovers from a pelvic fracture in mid-February

and needs to be in shape to go to Israel in early May along with his wife, Lois. Thanks so much! ■

## Region 9: Michigan



We are very excited at *Frontline Bible Church* (FBC) in Byron Center, MI, to announce that on January 1 Dave Grube took on the part-time role of Executive Administrator. Dave's role is to provide organizational and strategic leadership at FBC for maximum mission engagement and growth. As a church we have struggled to progress through certain growth barriers, and Dave's many years of experience in organizations will be invaluable for us looking ahead. Dave's long history in the Grace Movement and the GGF makes this especially fun to have him in leadership. Welcome, Dave!

In early March, *Coopersville Bible Church* had the privilege of having the Mackensens, Barrantes Family, Shermans, Trumbowers, and Joyce Anderson at our missions conference. All of them had inspiring stories and dreams for the future of their ministries. What a joy to get to know each one of them just a little bit better! Even our *Coached By Christ* kids were able to hear from Ronnie Mackensen and Joyce Anderson. ■

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